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PUBH 570.50: Ethical issues in Public Health

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Ethics and Public Health
3 credit hours
Summer, 2013

Instructor: Ann Cook, PhD, Research Professor, Department of Psychology and Director, National Rural Bioethics Project.

Format: Online
For purposes of assignments and class activities, the week starts on Sunday, 12:01 a.m. and ends on Saturday at Midnight.

Office Hours: Dr. Cook will be available on the phone, via e-mail, and in her office during scheduled hours. Phone and email contact is welcome.

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Course Description
This course provides an opportunity to study the values and moral issues that have influenced U.S. public health policies over time. The course begins with a rationale for studying the ethical dimensions of public health and examines ethical decision-making in arenas such as policy development, clinical care, research, environmental health, occupational health, resource allocation, and genetics. The materials used in this class are designed to offer a historical sense of health-related issues and provide experiences in applying ethically informed approaches to the development of public health policy. The materials will also help students examine their own ethical beliefs, appreciate differing ethical perspectives, and demonstrate tolerance for approaches different from their own.

This class offers an ambitious and challenging course of study. The work of a 16 week semester class is compressed into 10 weeks. You should expect to allocate 12-15 hours of work per week to class-related activities. While the investment is sizable, it is hoped that the lessons learned from this class will be helpful, over the years, when you encounter ethically complicated public health problems.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
At the end of the course the student should be able to:
1) Describe the relevance of ethical theory for examining and resolving major public health problems;
2) Develop critical skills for evaluating and articulating moral and philosophical claims, arguments, and goals that accompany public health policy;
3) Conduct a review of the ethics literature for analysis of a specified public health issue;
4) Formulate, present, and defend ethically informed positions on public health policy issues and communicate these ideas and conclusions, both orally and in writing, to patients, patients' families, colleagues, staff, and other decision makers in society;
5) Contribute to Public Health Program and Policy Development
6) Communicate in Public Health Settings
7) Practice Public Health with People from Diverse Populations
8) Collaborate with the Community in the Practice of Public Health
9) Base Public Health Practice on Scientific Evidence
10) Reflect on and analyze the public health administrator's responsibility to help develop and implement social policies regarding the protection of the public's health;

11) Apply ethical theories, principles, and approaches in designing a public health intervention

12) Respond to Public Health Issues in Rural Settings

More information about the Course Objectives and the associated UM MPH Competencies can be accessed at the following link:

COURSE FORMAT
This course will be delivered online with support from UMOnline. Assigned readings and case studies will form the basis for review and discussion during the ongoing class postings on the forum/discussion board. Students are expected to complete all readings and meaningfully engage in discussion and application of the course material. The study of ethics involves a dialogue and so active and respectful participation in class discussions is essential. The failure to meaningfully participate via the Forum/Discussion Board will be reflected in the Final Grade. Be sure to use the weekly readings – and the Background Materials – as you develop your responses.

UMOnline Preparatory Course
UMOnline provides instruction on how to use Moodle as a student. Since you are enrolled in an online class, you are also automatically enrolled into this introduction class, titled “Taking an Online Course at UMT.” If you have not taken a course supported by Moodle, completion of this non-credit course or taking an equivalent course on-campus is required before the end of the first week of class.

Library Resources
Some assignments, including your final presentation, will require library resources. To access the UM’s Mansfield Library resources from off-campus, students will be required to enter their username and password. This is the same ID and password that you use to login to Moodle and use for your official UM e-mail address. According the UM library web page: “When connecting to licensed library resources from off-campus, users will be prompted to login using the "standard UM-M computer access user ID" and password. This is the same account used for campus wireless accounts and students' email service. Students and employees can now look up their log-in names on CyberBear” (http://weblib.lib.umt.edu/remote.html)

Assignments
The coursework will involve four major assignments. Students are required to:

- Complete the weekly assigned readings including the Background Readings;
- Consistently participate in class discussion of readings and cases via the Forum/Discussion Board;
- Maintain an Ethics Journal throughout the summer session;
- Complete and submit a final project.

The expectations for each assignment are as follows:

Assigned Readings
- The assigned readings and other supplemental materials are provided for each week of class. Participation in class activities and discussions necessitates completion of readings by Sunday at midnight of each week. As you open each article, you can choose the magnification level that works best and provides the most clarity for you.

Discussion Board
- A discussion forum can be accessed through the Advanced Forum. There will be a forum for each week of class. The discussion questions, following the weekly case study, reflect issues that are related to the assigned readings. Students should consistently use the assigned readings as reference points for responding to questions and discussing and presenting ideas with one another. Consider how the ideas in the assigned readings complement or conflict.
with one another. Be sure to examine the Discussion Grade Matrix (see Background Materials in Course Description) to understand how discussion-related activities will be graded. As the discussion evolves, students can extend the dialogue by posting additional questions that may be relevant to the issues and themes under discussion. The discussion should reflect your leadership in recognizing ethical issues and your growing skill in ethical deliberation. Simplistic statements of agreement or disagreement are discouraged.

- All students are required to meaningfully participate in online discussions via the Discussion Board at least four times each week. Discussions of the readings and responses to specific questions will occur Monday through Friday. Class participation is a proxy for the kind of dialogue that may occur in work-place settings; so while it might initially feel uncomfortable to post your perspectives and comments, you will be honing some valuable skills. Therefore, class participation will be closely monitored and will constitute a significant portion of the grade for this course. Your postings should show that you are participating in and expanding the discussion throughout the week. It would be unwise to wait until the end of the week and then make the minimum required four postings. That unfortunate choice would be reflected in your grade. Rather, you should aim for daily postings and your postings should show a growing understanding of the complex issues under discussion.

**Ethics Journal**

- The journal will be maintained, throughout the course, to record the analysis of the student’s evolving perceptions and responses to the materials and the on-line discussions. The Journal provides an opportunity to explore how personal beliefs can influence approaches to ethical decisionmaking. Journal entries will focus on four themes:
  - Identification of the key points or ethical features of issues under discussion during the week;
  - Examination of how one’s own life story including how values and preferences influence perceptions/resolutions of issues;
  - Consideration of one’s area of expertise in responding to the problems as well as guides or standards that might be relevant when searching for solutions; and
  - Kinds of additional personal or professional ethics-related problems that might be expected, given the topics under discussion and areas for improvement or further consideration.

The journal will be submitted to the professor via email or on-line by 5:00 pm on July 25th. The Journals will not be made available for view by other students enrolled in the course.

**Final Project**

- The fourth major assignment involves completion of a final project. In lieu of a traditional final exam, each student will submit a final project/presentation that introduces a public health issue, identifies ethical considerations, and offers approaches for resolution including policy development. Each student should design his or her presentation for a specific audience that needs to understand an important public health problem (e.g., hospital board, county commissioners, employee wellness program, state office of health and human services, other specified audience). The project should show integration of the lessons learned throughout the course. You have the option to creatively design your project in an accessible format that you believe would be effective, given your issue and your target population. The on-line presentation should engage the audience and facilitate the uptake of important information. Public health professionals are routinely expected to give such presentations and this is a good opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge gained through the coursework. The on-line presentation of the final project must be submitted by 5:00 pm on Monday, July 23, 2012. After being submitted as an Assignment, all presentations will be uploaded in the Week 10 section and will be available for viewing, analysis, and comment by all students. Viewing, analysis and comments are required.

**Grades**

The grading of ethics can pose some difficulties, in part because there can be a considerable disconnect between what one says, what one believes, and what one does. For this class, grades are based on a
student’s ability to complete assignments, identify ethical issues, apply traditions, defend positions, and engage in respectful dialogue. Hopefully this course will provide you with resources and approaches that help you respond to public health issues that you may encounter throughout your career. That goal is dependent upon the energy and commitment that you are willing to expend. The discussion matrix and other materials provided as Background Materials Section offer indication of how class participation will be graded. Lessons learned from this class are very much dependent upon the energy expended.

Late assignments will be graded zero unless there are very serious and verifiable extenuating circumstances. Students who wish to request permission to submit an assignment late must contact Dr. Cook well before the assignment deadline.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**
1. Evidence of completion of readings − 25%
2. Consistent participation via the Discussion Board − 30%
3. Completion of other assignments including:
   - Ethics Journal, a 10-week journal of responses to readings − 20%
   - Final project to be presented to the class − 25%

This course will use the traditional letter grade option without the use of pluses or minuses. Therefore, final grades will consist of the following: A, B, C, D, F. Grades will be calculated based on the standard formula (90-100% = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; 59% and below = F).

Late assignments including failure to participate via the Discussion Board will be graded zero unless there are serious and verifiable extenuating circumstances.

**MOODLE COURSE PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS**
Moodle will be used in this class and online activities will be required throughout the semester.

**Announcements**
Class announcements will be posted by the instructor. Moodle system administrators will sometimes post announcements about the online system.

**Communication**
Communication will take place using e-mail and discussion boards. E-mail should be used for “private” communication with the instructor or other students. *Any questions regarding grades or communication about more personal issues should be handled via email.* Please include PUBHEthics in the subject line for e-mail communication with the instructor.

Discussion boards are appropriate for questions or discussions that would normally occur in the classroom. Remember that the discussion board is public and your classmates can read what you post there!

**Course Materials**
Assignments and required readings will be posted on Blackboard in the Learning Units section.

**Submitting Assignments Electronically**
All assignments will be submitted electronically through the Assignments option within Blackboard.

**Important:**
- Assignments are due when specified.
- Save your completed assignments as a Word document with the file name *YourLastName_AssignmentNumber* (e.g. Smith_assignment1.doc.)
- Make sure that your name, the date, and the assignment number are also included at the top of your completed assignment.
- Submit your assignment through the Assignments area on Moodle.
If you need assistance with viewing or submitting your assignments, please call the Help Desk at 406-243-4357 or refer to the UMOnline student resources at http://umonline.umt.edu/studentsupport/default.htm.

Logging In
You are expected to log in, at minimum, four days per week to read current announcements that have been posted and to participate in class discussions. You may do this at any time of day. More frequent log-ins are encouraged. The Instructor will generally answer e-mails, respond to discussions, etc. during traditional work hours (M-F 8:00 a.m. - 5 p.m.).

REQUIRED READINGS
The required reading materials for each week’s classes have been placed in the sections for each week of class. A considerable amount of reading is required so students need to plan accordingly.

ADDITIONAL NOTES
In accordance with University of Montana’s mission to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, necessary accommodations for students with disabilities will be made whenever possible. If you require accommodations, please provide written information regarding your disability from the Disability Services as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made. This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes will be announced in the announcement section of Blackboard.

Plagiarism Warning
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321.

Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own. It is unethical and unacceptable in the academic community. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion. (See UM Student Conduct Code).

Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording but also ideas. Acknowledgment of whatever is not one's own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one's own original work is plagiarism. (Source: http://www2.umt.edu/catalog/acpolpro.htm)

Topics and Reading Schedule
Background Materials for Summer Session (these materials should be accessed throughout the term)
• Moral Rules
• Matrix for Grading Class Discussion
• Decisionmaking Tool
• Fact Sheet: Tradition, Profession, Values
• Fact Sheet: Collective Good and Individual Right
• Fact Sheet: Research with Children
• Dialogue Overview
• Code of Ethics for Public Health
• Ethical Theories Overview
• Medical Professionalism in the New Millenium

Week 1: May 27
Background and rationale for the study of public health ethics including:
- Analysis of the values, morals, principles, and approaches that shape public health policy;
- Examination of processes for analyzing problems and making ethically informed decisions.

Readings/Assignments:
- Cook, A. Lecture Notes/Overview of the Week’s Materials
- Case Study
- Begin Ethics Journal

Week 2: June 3
The health of the public: Whose voice, Whose Vision?
- Examination of the legacy created by past medical and scientific experiments;
- Examination of relevant issues including vulnerability, use of power, foreseeable risks, exploitation, and other issues that can compromise research and ethical public health interventions.

Readings
- Case Study
- Continue Ethics Journal
Week 3: June 10
The Context of Care: Responsibilities, Relationships, Burdens and Moral Distress

- Overview of the individual, professional, and system conflicts and burdens that can accompany public health decisionmaking.
- Examination of communal responsibilities and relationships that emerge in public health.

Readings

Case Study
- Continue Ethics Journal
- Start to think about Final Project

Week 4: June 17
To Err is Human: Mistakes, Conflicts, Uncertainty and Futility

- Examination of error in the context of public health decisionmaking;
- Examination of the role of disclosure including processes and protocols for engaging the public in public health decisionmaking;

Readings
- Case Study
- Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project
Week 5: June 24
Research, Risk, Protection and Informed Consent

- Introduction to research ethics including the examination of processes and protocols designed to ensure protection of human subjects;
- Examination of issues such as the best interests of a population, the good of the community, and rights of individuals;

Readings

- Case Study
- Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project

Week 6: July 1
The Ethics of Disease Prevention and Control

- Examination of the tensions between individual rights and community protections
- Analysis of the ethics of social marketing and public health efforts to minimize the social effects of risky choices;
- Examination of ethically acceptable restrictions and prohibitions designed to enhance public health and safety.

Readings


• Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project

**Week 7: July 8**

The Ethics of Environmental and Occupational Health

- Examination of ways that we assess environmental and occupational risks;
- Examination of environmental/occupational health as it relates to concepts such as protection of vulnerable populations versus maximizing overall welfare;
- Examination of the relationship of scientific facts to ethical protections;
- Analysis of environmental risk, rights to knowledge, and informed consent: how much information does the public need?

**Readings**

- Case Study
- Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project

**Week 8: July 15**

Resources: Rationing and the Economics of Care

- Examination of the ethics of allocation and rationing

**Readings**


Gawande, A. (2009). The Cost conundrum: What a Texas town can teach us about healthcare. The New Yorker, June 1:


Case Study

Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project

Week 9: July 22
Ethics, Genetics, and Biotechnology

Examination of the role of technology and genetics in public health policies and interventions

Readings.


Washington v. Catalona, et al. United States District Court, Eastern District of Missouri. (Option for extra credit)


Case Study

Continue Ethics Journal and work on Final Project

Week 10: July 29
Student Projects: Lessons Learned

Submit Final Project on Monday, July 29.
Submit Journal on Wednesday, July 31.